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**Statement of Treasurer Steven Grossman on H.4121**  
***An Act relative to the reduction of gun violence***  
**Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security**  
**June 3, 2014**

Chairman Timilty, Chairman Naughton, and members of the committee. I am here today to express my strong support for H.4121, Speaker DeLeo's legislation to strengthen the Commonwealth's gun safety laws.

In considering this measure, we should take full note of two fundamental principles:

First, protecting the people of Massachusetts from violence is one of our most profound responsibilities as public servants.

Second, *gun laws save lives*.

We should be proud that Massachusetts is a national leader in gun safety with some of the strongest and most effective gun laws in the country. Because of those laws and regulations, even as an urban industrial state, Massachusetts has the second lowest firearm fatality rate in the nation.

Nevertheless, 270 grieving families lost loved ones killed by guns in Massachusetts in 2010. I'm not satisfied. None of us are satisfied. We can and must do better.

The nation has been shocked by mass murders committed with firearms, including the December 2012 elementary school massacre in Newtown, Connecticut. We were equally shocked by recent shootings across the Commonwealth in Worcester, Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and other communities.

I want to applaud Speaker DeLeo for his leadership on this vital issue. He appointed a task force to develop recommendations and then drafted legislation that takes significant steps to reduce gun violence.

Moreover, he did so without trampling on the rights of law-abiding citizens to own firearms. The reforms we are discussing today target criminals and other dangerous individuals; not responsible, law-abiding gun owners.

I do not want to take up the committee's time by detailing each provision of H.4121.

However, I would be remiss if I failed to commend the Speaker for addressing *both* the need for thorough background checks on potential purchasers and for additional mental health services to deal with individuals who are at risk of harming themselves or others.

We must not forget how much of this tragic loss of life through suicide can be prevented through better access to treatment as well as stronger gun safety laws and regulations. The legislation's focus on mental health programs is especially crucial to the prevention of gun suicides. Of the 270 gun deaths in Massachusetts in 2010, 138 – more than half – were suicides.

The Speaker's bill protects people with mental illness from being stigmatized while putting Massachusetts into compliance with the National Instant Background Check System.

As the chairman of the Massachusetts School Building Authority, I am particularly pleased with the emphasis this bill places on public school safety. MSBA has worked with education and public safety officials to review best practices in public school building security features, and I can assure the committee that the authority will do all it can to assist with implementation of H.4121.

I also applaud the measures in H.4121 that will bring greater consistency and predictability to licensing and sales processes as well as to further increase penalties for illegal gun trafficking.

As many of you know, I have proposed additional steps to bring public safety in line with 21st century technology and common sense.

Let me very clear on one point. I urge my colleagues in the Legislature to support this bill, so that the Governor can sign it into law this session. But in the coming years, I believe Massachusetts can and should take additional steps to reduce gun violence.

First, I strongly support Governor Patrick's common-sense proposal to limit gun purchases to one gun a month. Preventing the bulk purchases of firearms deters straw

purchases and gun trafficking. A legitimate gun purchaser does not need to buy guns by the dozen.

Second, in the immediate future, I believe we should take the brainpower of the same innovation economy that produced smart phones and apply that technology to make smart guns. If the design and materials used in firearms has evolved with new technologies why shouldn't gun locks evolve as well?

Modern electronics can be used to help ensure that only the authorized user of a gun can fire it. This is a safeguard against children playing with weapons and against the use of stolen guns. I believe this can be done by current regulations. This is an action the Attorney General can take today. If we can regulate the use of toy guns as a consumer safety product, surely we can do the same for real ones.

This is not to detract from the significance of the legislation before the committee. It builds a strong base of public safety protections that the residents of Massachusetts want and need. We all will be safer if H.4121 becomes law, and I strongly urge the committee to report it favorably.